

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will **always** hurt me.

Good morning. My name is Anne Eason and I am a special education attorney with an office located on 10 Wall Street in Norwalk. Most of my clients are students with intellectual disabilities. I also co-authored a book, *IEP and Inclusion Tips*, which focuses on students with intellectual disabilities. Most important, I am mother to Eva, a delightful 17-year-old student, fully included at New Canaan High School, who happens to have Down syndrome.

Today I made the decision to take a day off from work and drive 90 minutes because I wanted to share how very important it is for DMR to change its antiquated name. The world has changed and certain names that used to be OK are now unacceptable. Words matter. When someone calls someone else a retard, it hurts. I personally cringe, as do each of my 4 children. The name Department of Mental Retardation needs to be changed. I suggest that it is called the Department of Developmental Services.

After changing the name, I hope that eventually DMR will broaden its scope of services, beyond just individuals with intellectual disabilities. There are no services for adults with other significant disabilities, such as Autism. It is unfair to serve only a selected part of the population with significant disabilities. I do realize that expanding population that DMR serves will mean less money for everyone, such as my child. But there is no justification to support some and not others. One reason that DMR is so financially stretched is because it shamefully continues to keep the Southbury Training School open, Connecticut's last remaining institution, and then it throws the remaining crumbs to those of us who live in the community. I would urge you to close down the Southbury monstrosity. Locking away humans with disabilities is an outdated mode of providing services to persons with intellectual disabilities. Then use that money to serve all individuals with developmental disabilities in the community, under the umbrella of The Department of Developmental Services.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

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